

The following questions were asked and answered at the IIP Bidders conference held at the University of Maryland Conference Center on March 21, 2001:

Question 1. What is the relationship between the Instrument Incubator Program (IIP) and the Earth System Science Program (ESSP), if any?

Answer: There is no connection between the two programs. An attempt was made to separate the two program NRAs in time, but a delay in the release of the IIP NRA caused an overlap, which understandably strains resources since bidders may be interested in bidding on both programs. It is the Enterprises intention, for future solicitations, to try to separate the two in time.

Question 2. How “hard” is the cut-off at Technology Readiness Level 6 (TRL-6) given the subjectivity of TRLs?

Answer: The IIP focuses on TRLs in the range of TRL-3 through TRL-6. The Peer Review Process will provide a filter for proposed TRLs. A goal for any submission should be to show an advance in TRL during the project execution phase. Higher TRLs may be awarded for shorter periods (i.e., a technology development effort starting at TRL-5 may be awarded only a one-year contract.

Question 3. The NRA indicates that airborne systems can be an end-point for the IIP. How does this fit within the guidelines for a maximum end-point at the TRL-6 level?

Answer: This question came up at the last IIP release. The IIP is a technology development program. The proposal must involve new technology, and must show an advance in TRL over the execution phase of the project. Under these guidelines, an airborne system could be a proposed end-point for a submission. However, the proposer should not be taking a proven technology and attempting to solve the engineering problem of fitting the package on an airplane. Simply proposing this would not be considered a true technology initiative.

Question 4. A question was raised concerning the next New Millennium Program (NMP) opportunity.

Answer: While not directly related to the IIP, there are certain actions currently under way at NASA HQ to modify/re-define the NMP Program. Proposed changes may allow for testing of subsystems versus the full up “mission

approach” previously used. While the full blown “mission approach” may still be used, the revision to the program may provide opportunities for follow-on activities for IIP proposers.

Question 5. Are advanced aircraft subsystems valid candidates for the IIP?

Answer: Yes, providing that they advance technology in the one of the proposed Earth Science focus areas. However, the proposal **MUST** infuse new technology versus simply proposing a re-engineering process to marry a technology to a platform.

Question 6. Would modification of an existing technology (i.e., a technology that is currently being applied to a real science problem) constitute a valid program submission?

Answer: While this question is difficult to respond to without specifics, it would seem that modifications to existing instrumentation/components that would offer a new capability could fall within the guidelines of the IIP. Again, the issue is “new technology” versus repackaging.

Question 7. Who will be reviewing the IIP proposals?

Answer: The panels reviewing the IIP proposals will consist of members of the science community (to assess science relevance) and technologists (to assess the “do-ability” of the proposed undertaking) from a technology perspective.

Question 8. Is there any “weighting” being given to the evaluation process (e.g., if a proposed technology needs additional factors such as special calibration to prove viable, is the need for such additional efforts counted against a proposer) that could be shared with the proposers?

Answer: There is no quantifiable “weighting” scheme. Evaluation panels will consist of both scientists and technologists and the panel members will take into consideration all aspects of a proposer’s technical solution to a given problem.

Question 9. Considering the science and technology focus areas provided in the NRA, will proposals submitted outside of these focus areas be disqualified as non-responsive?

Answer: In general, the review panels will be following the guidelines provided in the NRA. However, if the review panel feels that a proposal that was outside of the focus areas was really outstanding and highly responsive to the evaluation criteria, it could still be considered for selection.

Question 10. The NRA has science focus areas followed by some descriptive text. Do the proposers have to stick exactly to the focus areas and the specific descriptions, or is there latitude within a given focus area?

Answer: This is similar to Question 9 above. It was impossible to get all the words in the NRA regarding each of the focus areas and maintain a reasonable page count. Proposers are welcome to reference the ESE Science Plan for further amplification of the science focus areas. However, as previously stated, all submitted proposals will be reviewed for uniqueness and applicability to Earth Science Enterprise (ESE) needs. Selections will be made based upon these factors.

Question 11. How much lower will these “other” category proposals be scored?

Answer: This question is impossible to answer quantitatively. All submissions will be evaluated based on content and applicability to ESE needs.

Question 12. Are electronic versions of the proposals required (in addition to the hard copy requirements)?

Answer: Proposers are strongly encouraged to submit their proposals electronically. We will accept electronic media (magnetic or optical, Macintosh or IBM PC compatible format) in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect or Portable Document Format (PDF) formats. All submitted electronic data will be cursorily checked against the hard copy for accuracy. It is the responsibility of the proposer to ensure that the paper copy is the same as the electronic version.

Question 13. Do the Co-Investigators (CO-Is) need to have an “Authorizing Official’s Signature” versus a standard “Letter of Commitment”?

Answer: No. The Principal Investigator’s (PI’s) institution is the only entity required to provide an “Authorizing Official’s Signature”. We encourage the inclusion of “Letter of Commitment” from each CO-I’s sponsoring organization.

Question 14. Will an “outreach component” be a part of the evaluation process?

Answer: No. While outreach is encouraged, it will not be evaluated.

Question 15. What is the status of “renewals” (i.e., former IIP awardees)?

Answer: There is no such thing as a “renewal” in this program. A former IIP awardee may submit a proposal in response to this NRA, however it must be submitted as if he/she is proposing for the first time. No credit will be given to (or taken away from) a previous IIP awardee. His/her submission will be based on the merits of the proposal and its responsiveness to the science and technology focus areas.

Question 16. Will a one-year proposal be judged differently from a two- or three-year proposal?

Answer: All proposals will be evaluated the same (i.e., based on the merits of the proposal and its responsiveness to the science and technology focus areas).

Question 17. Will there be a maximum number of contracts that will be awarded out of this IIP NRA?

Answer: No. The number of contracts to be awarded from this activity will depend entirely on the Program funding profile. In other words, following a ranking of the proposals (based on the science and technology applicability to the focus areas previously discussed) we will select the maximum number of proposals that will fit within the ESTO funding profile.

Question 18. Where should the 20 hard copies of the proposal be delivered?

Answer: Delivery of any proposal material should be made directly to the NASA Peer Review Services contractor as per the instructions in the NRA. **Do not send proposals to NASA HQ or directly to the ESTO.**